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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 24 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations presents her compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/251 entitled "Human Rights Council" of 15 March 2006, of which paragraph 15 states that "elections of the first members of the Council shall take place on 9 May 2006".

In this connection, the Permanent Representative of Thailand has further the honour to submit the candidature of Thailand to the Human Rights Council at the above-mentioned elections. A copy of Thailand's voluntary pledges and commitments in the field of human rights, prepared in accordance with paragraph 8 of the resolution, is also enclosed herewith.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 24 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Thailand's voluntary pledges and commitments in the field of human rights

Thailand is firmly committed to the respect for human dignity, justice, compassion, non-discrimination and a sense of moral obligations to fellow human beings, which together constitute core human rights principles. On 10 December 1948, Thailand joined the other 47 States Members of the United Nations in voting to adopt the draft Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since then, Thailand has gradually accepted international legal obligations concerning human rights. Thailand is, at present, a State party to five of the seven core international human rights instruments. They are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Thailand is also a State party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, thereby accepting the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to receive and consider individual complaints regarding alleged violations of the Convention. Most recently, in January and February 2006, Thailand became a State party to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict, respectively.

Furthermore, Thailand is a State party to five of the eight core conventions under the International Labour Organization pertaining to forced labour and its abolition (Conventions Nos. 29 and 105), equal remuneration between men and women for work of equal value (Convention No. 100), minimum age for employment (Convention No. 138), and the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour (Convention No. 182). Thailand is also a State party to the four Geneva Conventions on international humanitarian law of 1949.

Thailand's aforementioned legal obligations are given effect to under Thai law. In particular, Thailand's present Constitution of 1997 guarantees civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and fundamental freedoms for all, in line with its international legal obligations. Various mechanisms have also been set up under the present Constitution to advance the course of human rights within the country. They are the National Human Rights Commission, the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the Administrative Court and the Constitutional Court.

Moreover, Thailand attaches great importance to the preparation and presentation of its reports to the relevant treaty bodies. In July 2005, Thailand submitted its initial report under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to the Human Rights Committee, and in January 2006, submitted its periodic reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Due regard is given to the observations and recommendations made by these treaty bodies.

At the regional level, Thailand fully supports initiatives to enhance dialogue and cooperation among countries within the region, such as the annual Canada-China-Norway Symposium on Human Rights. Initiatives to discuss the possibility of establishing human rights mechanisms at the regional and subregional levels are also very much encouraged by Thailand.

Over the years, Thailand has played host to several regional and subregional meetings and workshops on human rights, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). For example, in 2001, Thailand hosted the Ninth Asia-Pacific Workshop on Regional Cooperation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. In 2004, Thailand hosted the Inter-Sessional Workshop on National Human Rights Plans of Action and Human Rights Education in the Asia-Pacific Region and the Subregional Workshop on the Implementation of the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Thailand recognizes a strong linkage between human rights and human security. Thailand is a member of the Human Security Network (HSN) which is a group of 14 like-minded countries in all parts of the world working together to guarantee freedom from fear, freedom from want and human dignity for all. Activities in the area of human rights under HSN include the promotion of human rights education, the protection of and assistance to children affected by armed conflicts and the promotion of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. Thailand sees the Human Rights Council as a turning point in the promotion and protection of human rights and looks forward to contributing to the work of the Council, especially in its formative first session.

In the light of its candidature for election to the Human Rights Council and in accordance with paragraph 8 of resolution 60/251, Thailand pledges voluntary commitments as follows:

Promotion and protection of human rights at the international level

- Thailand will fully cooperate with the Human Rights Council in all of its endeavours to further the course of human rights worldwide through constructive dialogue and cooperation.
- Thailand will continue to support efforts to mainstream human rights within the United Nations system.
- Thailand reaffirms its belief that all human rights are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and will continue to promote and protect all human rights, be they civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development on an equal footing.
- Thailand will continue to support the work of various United Nations agencies and funds dealing with human rights matters such as OHCHR, UNHCR, UNIFEM, INSTRAW and UNICEF, through, inter alia, financial contribution on a regular basis.

- Thailand will continue to support the work of national human rights institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, through, inter alia, regular financial contributions to relevant agencies such as the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions.

Promotion and protection of human rights at the national level

- Thailand will continue to mainstream human rights in all of its work at the national level.
- Thailand will continue to promote human rights education at all levels as a tool to prevent human rights violations.
- Thailand will cooperate with the United Nations treaty monitoring bodies by implementing, to the best of its capacity, their concluding observations and recommendations in regard to Thailand.
- Thailand is considering becoming a party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
- Thailand is in the process of taking steps under its constitution to become a party to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.
- Thailand is taking steps to become a party to the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the four Geneva Conventions on international humanitarian law of 1949.

As a country that has played an active role in the United Nations reform process, especially the reform of the United Nations human rights mechanisms, it is Thailand's aspiration to have an opportunity to participate in the first session of the Human Rights Council as one of its members. Thailand has a high expectation of the work of the newly established Human Rights Council and will do its utmost to ensure that the Council becomes a main forum for constructive dialogue and cooperation on issues concerning human rights.